

Mindfulness in the Workplace: Establishing Your Flow



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Scope of Stress in the American Workplace

- One fourth of employees view their jobs as the number one stressor in their lives
 - Northwestern national Life
- Three fourths of employees believe the worker has more on-the-job stress than a generation ago
 - Princeton Survey Research Associates
- Problems at work are more strongly associated with health complaints than any other life stressor – more so than even financial problems or family problems
 - St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Co.

Principles of Mindfulness

- “Stay here, quivering like a drop of mercury. This moment . . . Every moment, if it is genuinely inside you, brings what you need.” - Rumi
- Staying in the Now
 - Mindfulness as a stress buster
 - The costs of past and future tense
- Essence of Mindfulness
 - Presence to whatever your own experience is
 - Whatever is happening right now, be present to that



- Mindfulness as a special kind of consciousness
 - Lowering of the noise, suspension of business
 - Paying attention to whatever is happening
- 7 Methods for practicing mindfulness
 - These 7 methods are perspectives for cultivating well-being
 - 7 Principles are summarized by Jon Kabat-Zinn
- Falling asleep: a Model for Well-being
 - Putting certain conditions in place allows for sleep
 - Principles for mindfulness are the certain conditions for well-being
- Puppies and mind-training

Beginner's Mind

- Seeing everything as if for the first time
- Often beliefs about what we know prevent us from seeing things as they really are
 - The Unknown Ceiling
 - Cultural Worldviews
- No moment is like any other
 - Each is unique and contains unique possibilities
- Bringing the extraordinary to the ordinary
 - Receptivity to new possibilities
 - We don't get stuck in a particular way of seeing things
- Practicing
 - Your hand



Patience

- A form of wisdom
 - The ability to sit back and wait for an expected outcome without experiencing anxiety, tension, or frustration
 - Tolerance, compassion, understanding toward those who are slower than you in developing maturity, skill, coping
 - Making peace with your human fragility, your flaws in physical, emotional, and spiritual growth
- Often things must unfold in their own time
 - Children and butterflies
- Cultivating patience toward others, ourselves, our minds, and bodies
 - Giving ourselves room to make mistakes, feel bad, to have all of our experiences
 - Why? Because we are having them anyway!
 - Why rush through one moment to get to another one?
 - These are all the fabric of our lives.
- Teaching Story and the unseen harmony of life
- The results of impatience

Non-Judging

- Mindfulness: A stance of being an impartial witness
- Tuning inward: the constant stream of judging and reacting to experience
 - The habitual activity of mind: labeling and categorizing
 - Reactivity to perceived value
 - Things, people, events:
 - Good (feel good, get more)
 - Bad (feel bad, avoid)
 - Neutral
 - Judging is a mechanical habit
 - "Things in themselves" vs. "Things as we know them"
 - A pre-occupation with liking and disliking
 - "This is boring" "This is a great sandwich." "When is she going to say something interesting?"
- Non-judging: a suspension of the decision as to whether something is good or bad . . . It just is
 - Allowing things to be as they are



Trust

- A belief in the basic goodness of yourself, the world and other people
 - Placing trust outside yourself
 - Other people are a measure of my worth
 - Its impossible to become someone else
 - Authenticity is becoming more yourself
 - I'll be okay as long as event X doesn't happen
 - Trust is believing in yourself that whatever happens to you or with other people, that you can persevere
- When we practice mindfulness, we take responsibility for being ourselves
 - When we make mistakes, we maintain a basic belief in our inherent worth
 - When bad events happen, we remind ourselves that we have the where-with-all to survive it



Non-Striving

- Trying less, being more
 - Intentional action, process not outcome
 - Not non-doing!
 - Applied doing, but w/o the “must” or “deadline”
 - “If only I worked harder on the project, was a better spouse, more intelligent, then my life would make sense and be okay.”
 - Don't use this talk to be a better person! Simply follow the principles of mindfulness as ends in themselves
 - Objective is to stay present, not get somewhere
 - With regular practice, your goals will happen by themselves



Acceptance

- Seeing things as they actually are in the present
 - Sooner or later, we must face this reality
 - Putting aside major calamities, we waste considerable energy denying and resisting what is already fact
 - Process of acceptance
 - Strong feelings (anger sadness) > denial > acceptance
- “Stress happens when the mind resists what is”
 - - Dan Millman
 - Refusing to accept, we place our will on the world
 - This creates tension and prevents change
- Teaching Example: Being overweight
 - Process vs. outcome
- Acceptance creates the preconditions for healing
- “The wisdom of no escape” – Pema Chodron



Letting Go

- We often cling to what we know, what we think we have
 - We hold tightly as if our lives depended on it
 - Certain thoughts and experiences we want to hold onto
- India and catching monkeys
 - Wanting more of what we like (possessions, feeling states)
 - Wanting less of what we don't like
- What do you get attached to?
 - Practicing letting go, we allow things to be in our world w/o clinging and attachment
- Brittle or subtle?
- Letting go, sleep, and stress



Constructing Your Inner World

- Fear/Conflict/Unconscious based System
 - Routine
 - Judging
 - Fighting
 - Struggle
 - Impatience
 - Suspicion
 - Clinging
- Trust/Being/Conscious based System
 - Beginner's Mind
 - Non-Judging
 - Non-Striving
 - Acceptance
 - Patience
 - Trust
 - Letting Go



Constructing Your Outer World

- Interpersonal Mindfulness
 - Developed by Gregory Kramer
 - Calming down, becoming aware, and moving from reactivity (trap) to freedom and choice in relationships
 - Stepping out of habits of reactivity into mindfulness
 - The problems in our relationships
 - How often do we feel unheard?
 - Do you have that one person in your department or at home that you just can't talk to w/o getting into a fight?
 - Determining our next attack in lieu of listening
 - Focus on winning or scoring points rather than communicating – its not a competition

■ The Steps

■ Listen

- Listen deeply, attempting to understand, rather than forming your next point

■ Pause

- After the other person speaks, take a moment to form your thought

■ Relax

- Stop your racing thoughts and relax through your breath
 - Note any physical sensations like a clenching gut, tightness in the jaw or throat

■ Open

- “Trust Emergence” > Out of relaxation and awareness of body sensations, new thoughts or images will arise
 - These may be emotionally painful or perspectives that are difficult to admit
 - Regardless, invite these in, without the usual reflexive looking away

■ Formulate a Response

- Synthesizing your moment-by-moment awareness, develop a response

■ In this practice, we take time and develop mindful awareness of what needs to happen next in our relationships

- We develop a wiser awareness that incorporates our body wisdom
- We use relaxation to slow down the process, reduce the competitive quality of communication, and be more present

Why Practice Mindfulness Meditation?

■ Mental Health Outcomes

- Meditation has been shown to reduce symptoms of anxiety (panic disorder & generalized anxiety disorder) and depression.
- For patients with recurring major depressive episodes (greater than 3 episodes) a mindfulness-based cognitive therapy program showed a reduced rate of relapse of depressive symptoms.

■ Primary Medical Outcomes

- Meditation has been shown to decrease high blood pressure in both pharmacologically treated and untreated hypertensive patients.
- Meditation has been shown to have a positive effect on insomnia.
- Meditation has been shown to benefit those with coronary artery disease.
- Patients with fibromyalgia have shown improvement in pain and fatigue in response to meditation.

Resources for Further Study

■ Books

- Tara Brach Radical Acceptance
- Pema Chodron When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times
The Places that Scare You
The Wisdom of No Escape: And the Path of Loving Kindness
- Martha Davis The Relaxation & Stress Reduction Workbook
- Jon Kabat-Zinn Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness
Wherever You Go There You Are
- Jack Kornfield A Path with Heart
After the Ecstasy, the Laundry

■ Audio Recordings

- Pema Chodron Getting Unstuck
- Joseph Goldstein Complete Meditation Instructions
- Jon Kabat-Zinn Mindfulness Meditation Practice CDs (Series I)
- Belleruth Naparstek Health Journeys: A Meditation for Relaxation & Wellness
Health Journeys: A Meditation to Help You with Healthful Sleep

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